



July 26th, 2020

Mr. Tom Perez
Chair
Democratic National Committee
SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Tom Perez:

I write to express my strong rejection of the wording used in the 2020 Democratic Party Platform draft with regards to Puerto Rico's political future. It is a step backwards from the timid support for self-determination proposed in 2016. The National Democratic Party has been a long-standing champion of civil rights and an advocate for equality. It is disheartening to read that the "people of Puerto Rico, should have the right to vote for President of the United States", but not that all other rights that stem from American citizenship should also be afforded to the people of Puerto Rico.

The support offered in this draft to granting statehood to our nation's capital underlines that its citizens are treated as second-class citizens. How would the treatment to American citizens in Puerto Rico be described, since they have no vote in Congress, lack representation in the Senate, are constantly discriminated in federal social programs, and cannot vote for their president? Our island has sent more men and women in uniform to fight for our liberty and democracy in our Armed Forces than many states and yet they do not have the same rights as their fellow soldiers and veterans. How is that acceptable to the National Democratic Party?

How is it possible that in this day and age Democrats are not raising their collective voice to end colonialism in Puerto Rico? It is not enough to favor self-determination. Who doesn't favor that? **Democrats must stand for more. Democrats must lead. We must stand unequivocally for equality.**

In 2012, Puerto Ricans clearly rejected the current status and have favored statehood in every referendum held since then. Solving Puerto Rico's century-old status problem and ending its colonial relationship with the United States cannot be achieved by validating that relationship as an option in our self-determination. And promoting the status resolution is clearly needed for Puerto Rico to be able to achieve the progress and opportunity afforded to our fellow Americans in the states.

The 2011 Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status, commissioned by then President Barack Obama, states that "...although there are a number of economic actions that should be taken immediately or in the short term, regardless of the ultimate outcome of the status question, identifying the most effective means of assisting the Puerto Rican economy depends on resolving the ultimate question of status. In short, the long-term economic well-being of Puerto Rico would be dramatically improved by an early decision on the status question."

It is clear that to advance Puerto Rico's road to progress, we must solve our status problem. And to solve our status problem we must take a stand toward equality for all American citizens in Puerto Rico. This November, Puerto Ricans will answer an important question about their future: 'Do you want Puerto Rico to be admitted as a state of the United States, Yes or No?' It is a question that we have not answered before. It is the same question Hawaii and Alaska answered before being admitted as the 49th and 50th states. It is the same question our fellow citizens from our nation's capital have answered in their quest for full citizenship. It is a simple question, which will yield a clear result. All Puerto Ricans can express their preference. Those who want all the rights and responsibilities as every citizen in the states can answer Yes, and those who do not want to be a state, for any reason, can say No.

All Democrats should support our right to decide whether we want to join the Union. All Democrats should stand for equality for every American citizen, because that is what our Constitution holds dear, that is the basis of our democracy.

As a former Resident Commissioner for Puerto Rico, co-chair of the DCCC, and delegate to our party, I urge you to follow the lead set forth by the NAACP delegates in its 2017 National Convention Resolution, and later ratified by its Board of Directors, supporting the Puerto Rican people's quest for statehood. The resolution states that "statehood for Puerto Rico is now a civil rights issue as the majority of the people have said that they want the core voting and citizenship rights that come with statehood". Furthermore, the Democratic National Committee in its Las Vegas, Nevada October 2017 meeting also approved a resolution, which affirmed that "perpetuation of the territorial status allows for an unequal and discriminatory treatment, which in turn represents a continuation of economic stagnation and instability, and it is legally and morally wrong for the United States of America, a world model for democratic principles, to maintain in the 21st century over 3.4 million U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico deprived of their full-fledged U.S. citizen rights when they have voted against remaining a territory and repeatedly through the ballot box endorsed becoming a state of the Union".



Puerto Ricans deserve equality and the Democratic National Party, in line with its legacy in defense of civil rights, must stand by our people in leading our fight for full democracy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pedro Pierluisi", is shown within a light gray rectangular box.

Pedro Pierluisi
Former Member of Congress
Puerto Rico

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